

Appl. No. 10/632,778  
Art Unit: 3679  
Docket No. 0156-P02889US01

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as shown in the following list, which is submitted to replace all prior listings of claims.

1. (Currently amended) A post and railing assembly comprising a cylindrical core; a rectangular frame surrounding ~~configured for securing around~~ the core; a rectangular shell having an inner surface and an outer surface, said shell having a top end, a bottom end and a side face extending between the top end and bottom end, said inner surface ~~being configured for engagement with~~ engaging the rectangular frame; a railing comprising a railing end, said railing end configured for coupling coupled with the side face of the outer surface of the rectangular shell; and a bracket on the side face ~~outer surface~~ of the shell, said bracket forming a socket, said railing end extending into said socket ~~adapted to receive said railing end~~ to secure said railing end to the side face of the shell ~~core through the shell~~.
2. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 1, wherein the frame comprises two frame halves each having a semicircular inner face, a generally rectangular outer face, and one or more frame fasteners that connect the frame halves together in a clamped arrangement around the core, said semicircular inner faces adjoining one another in the clamped arrangement to form a cylindrical surface that frictionally engages the core,

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said rectangular outer faces forming a continuous outer skirt that engages the inner surface of the shell.

3. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 1, wherein the shell, frames and brackets are formed of rigid polyvinylchloride.
4. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 1, wherein the bracket comprises a plurality of resilient flexible spring sheets in the socket, said spring sheets being biased inwardly and configured to impart inward pressure on the railing end when the railing is inserted in the socket.
5. (Currently amended) The post and railing assembly of claim 1, wherein the bracket comprises a cylindrical hole that extends through the bracket, said hole being adapted to receive a bracket fastener that extends through the hole and the shell and into said frame to secure the bracket on the cylindrical core against the outer face of the shell.
6. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 5, wherein the bracket fastener is configured to interconnect the frame, shell and bracket with said core.
7. (Currently amended) The post and railing assembly of claim 5 [[1]], comprising a generally cylindrical cover configured for insertion into the hole in the bracket, said cover having a resiliently flexible side wall and an end

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wall, said side wall when separated from the hole having a diameter that is slightly larger than the diameter of the hole and a longitudinal slot extending through the side wall of the cover, said side wall further being inwardly flexible to permit the cover to be inserted into the hole to enclose the fastener, said cover being inserted into the hole in a compressed condition in which the side wall is biased outwardly into frictional engagement with the interior wall of the hole.

8. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 7, wherein the bracket has an exterior contour, and the end wall of the cover has an exterior face that conforms to the exterior contour of the brackets surrounding the hole.
9. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 7, wherein said hole comprises an interior wall and a tongue projection extending along the interior wall, said tongue projection configured to mate with said longitudinal slot when the cover is inserted in the hole to limit rotational displacement of the cover relative to the interior wall of the hole.
10. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 7, wherein said hole comprises an interior wall and an aperture extending through the interior wall, said cover comprising a resilient flexible spring tab having a tapered face that slidably engages the interior wall of the hole as the cover is inserted into the hole, said spring tab being configured to flex inwardly in a biased condition

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during insertion into the hole and snap outwardly when the spring tab is aligned with the aperture in the interior wall of the hole.

11. (Currently amended) A post and railing assembly comprising a cylindrical core; a rectangular frame surrounding ~~configured for securing around the~~ core; a rectangular shell having an inner surface and an outer surface, said shell having a top end, a bottom end and a side face extending between the top end and bottom end, said inner surface ~~being configured for engagement with~~ engaging the rectangular frame; and a railing comprising a railing end, said railing end coupled with the side face of ~~configured for engaging the~~ rectangular shell, said frame providing vertical support for said railing end on ~~said cylindrical core.~~

12-14. (Cancelled).

15. (Currently amended) A bracket for coupling a railing member to a supporting structure, said bracket comprising a socket end adapted to receive the end of the railing member and a mounting end for connection to the supporting structure, said bracket having a plurality of resilient flexible spring sheets, each spring sheet having a fixed end connected substantially adjacent to the socket end and a cantilevered portion extending from the fixed end toward the mounting end of the bracket ~~that are biased inwardly in the socket, said spring sheets being configured to impart inward pressure on the railing end~~

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~~when the railing is inserted in the socket to secure the railing end in the socket.~~

16. (Original) The bracket of claim 15, comprising a rear face that forms a notch adapted to conform to a corner on the supporting structure.
17. (Original) The bracket of claim 15, comprising a curved rear face adapted to conform to a curved surface on the supporting structure.
18. (Currently amended) A bracket for coupling a railing member to a post structure, said bracket comprising a socket adapted to receive the end of the railing member and at least one hole for receiving a bracket fastener, ~~said bracket fastener being configured to extend through the hole to connect the bracket to the post structure, said bracket further comprising a generally cylindrical cover adapted to be inserted in said hole, said cover and having a resiliently flexible side wall and an end wall, said side wall having a diameter when separated from the hole that is slightly larger than the diameter of the hole a sidewall length and a longitudinal slot extending through the side wall, said side wall further being inwardly flexible to permit the cover to be inserted into the hole to enclose the fastener, said cover being inserted extending into the hole in a compressed condition in which the side wall is biased outwardly into frictional engagement with the interior wall of the hole with the length of said side wall completely inserted within the hole and said end wall positioned~~

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flush with the exterior contour of the bracket with no portion of the cover projecting out of the hole.

19. (Original) The bracket of claim 18, wherein the bracket has a curved exterior contour surrounding said hole, and the end wall of the cover has an exterior face with a curvature that conforms to the curved exterior contour of the bracket.
20. (Original) The bracket of claim 18, wherein said hole comprises an interior wall and a tongue projection extending along the interior wall, said longitudinal slot configured to mate with said tongue projection when the cover is inserted in the hole to limit rotational displacement of the cover relative to the interior wall of the hole.
21. (Currently amended) A post and railing assembly comprising a cylindrical core; a frame surrounding ~~configured for securing around~~ the core, said frame comprising a tubular center section and a plurality of support fins extending radially outwardly from the tubular center section; a rectangular shell having an inner surface and an outer surface, said inner surface being configured for engagement with the support fins on the rectangular frame; a railing comprising a railing end, said railing end configured for coupling coupled with the outer surface of the rectangular shell; and a bracket on the outer surface of the shell, said bracket forming a socket, said railing end extending into said



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~~socket adapted to receive said railing end to secure said railing to the shell~~  
~~core through the shell.~~

22. (Original) The post and railing assembly of claim 21, comprising a plurality of corner flanges extending outwardly from the support fins, said corner flanges being configured to engage the inner surface of the rectangular shell.
23. (New) The post and railing assembly of claim 1, wherein the bracket comprises a plurality of resilient flexible spring sheets in the socket, said railing extending through said spring sheets and displacing said spring sheets outwardly relative to the longitudinal axis of the socket, said spring sheets being biased inwardly toward the longitudinal axis of the socket and imparting inward pressure on the railing.
24. (New) The bracket of claim 15, wherein the spring sheets are spaced apart in the socket to permit insertion of the railing member between the spring sheets.